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The Life & Legacy of Alexander Carmichael, ed. Domhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart. The Island Book Trust: Port of Ness, Isle of Lewis, 2008. x + 193 pp. £15 paperback. ISBN 9780955542008

Eloquent praise is heaped upon Carmichael's great book by Canon MacQueen when he comments in his ecumenical sermon (that rounds off this collection of papers) that *Carmina Gadelica* eventually came to replace the Bible as his bedtime reading. There can be little dispute that *Carmina Gadelica* is a great book but perhaps not for all the right reasons. To some it may come as something of a surprise that the book has divided scholarly opinion and given rise to one of the greatest controversies to affect Gaelic scholarship since Macpherson's *Ossian*. Since attending the conference (in the summer of 2006 in Benbecula) on which this edited volume is based, I have been looking forward to its eventual publication. And I have not been disappointed as this book displaced all others (for a while, at least) as required bedtime reading. The first thing that struck me is that it is very well produced, with plenty of illustrations and well set out. Between this book's covers are thirteen articles, all of which have been carefully edited by Domhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart.

As the book title suggests the volume concerns Carmichael's life and the precious legacy of his collecting career. The editor sets the scene by offering a biographical study of one of the most interesting collectors of the nineteenth century, and, of course, the author of *Carmina Gadelica* (1900), a publication as important as it is controversial. This essay is brimming with information and it is easy to see that the long hours spent rummaging through the Carmichael collection archived at the University of Edinburgh have not been in vain. Not only does Stiùbhart put Carmichael's career into context in the fascinating cultural milieu of the late nineteenth century, but he also delves into many previously under-researched sidelights on both Carmichael and his contemporaries and thus offers a rounded view of both the man and his legacy. Acting as a foundation for the rest of the studies offered in the volume, this article deals with many of the aspects of Carmichael that are either expanded or touched upon by the rest of the papers on offer.

For example, Donald Black (Domhnall MacGilleDhuibh) provides local traditions about the different branches of the Carmichaels in Lismore and, although there is not a great deal to say about Carmichael's particular branch, there is a reason behind all of this. A short article then follows about Carmichael's time in Barra.

Then Ronald Black gets to the heart of the controversial matter and discusses that question that has dogged *Carmina Gadelica* since its publication. That question—should a reminder be needed—is one of authenticity. What lies between what Carmichael collected and what he actually published? It is argued that Carmichael did not make it all up,

but rather more confidence can be placed in the charms than in some of the narrative tales that he edited such as *Deirdre*, printed in 1905.

Of more interest, perhaps, to readers of this journal is the article concerning Celtic Christianity by Donald E. Meek who gives a stark warning that for the unwary *Carmina Gadelica* has been abused in ways that Carmichael had in no way intended.

The diverse nature of Carmichael's collection can readily be seen in what he gathered of the traditions concerning the MacMhuirich hereditary bards which forms the basis of an article by William Gillies.

The rest of the essays look at other areas of Carmichael's legacy. According to Hugh Cheape, Carmichael was fascinated by almost every aspect of Highland or Gaelic culture and such was his antiquarian interest in material culture that what he eventually gathered can still be seen in the West Highland Museum in Fort William.

Carmina Gadelica as one of the artistic pinnacles of Scottish printing in the early twentieth century is the topic covered by Murdo MacDonald.

Tangentially, perhaps, Jean-Didier Hache then gives a fascinating insight into the story of Nial MacEachern and Marshal MacDonald (material recently published in book format as *The French MacDonald*).

The large amount of Uist traditions housed at the School of Scottish Studies is the subject of Cathlin Macaulay's paper. Scarce has a collector been in the Uists who has not come away with something or other, and such jewels can still be heard or read in the School's archives.

An overview of the Carmichael project and its various aims informs Meghan Cote's article. And the best of luck to the project, for if a substantial grant is forthcoming then this has the potential to open up one of Scotland's great hidden treasures.

Lastly, there are various shorter papers concerning some of the local families from whom Carmichael collected some of his materials such as songs and tales.

This anthology of essays has many thought-provoking papers and also provides the best picture to date of the fascinating, if complex, character of Carmichael. It makes a lot of headway in the direction of placing Carmichael's legacy in its proper context. The mixture of academic essays and those written by knowledgeable locals is extremely refreshing, showing the potential of combining the work of both communities in a collaborative adventure; this was especially apparent at the conference and has happily transferred into print. It is also clear that although this volume goes some way to addressing some of the controversies of Carmichael's legacy there are still areas to explore further. Although there are minor, and unimportant, typos here and there, the editor and all the contributors (as well as the publishers) are to be congratulated for producing such a handsome volume which will not

disappoint anybody with an interest in Gaelic heritage. Though there is not one chapter written in Gaelic, nor a bibliography of Carmichael's literary work, it would be as churlish to complain about this as it would be for a man to grumble about being still hungry when he has already had his fill. Yet more of this would be very welcome indeed: it is sincerely to be hoped that more of Carmichael's material will eventually make its way into print.

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E. Patricia Dennison and Simon Stronach, *Historic Dunfermline: Archaeology and Development*. The Scottish Burgh Survey, Third Series. Dunfermline Burgh Survey Community Project: Dunfermline, 2007. 140 pp. £ 12 paperback. ISBN 9780955724404

The compilation and publication of *Historic Dunfermline: Archaeology and Development* was not an easy rig to sow. When the third Burgh Survey series was initially undertaken in 1994, Historic Scotland and the Centre for Scottish Urban History at the University of Edinburgh were named as co-producers of the series. The first chapter of the (now published) survey under review notes that the third series was to 'furnish local authorities, developers and residents with reliable information' and to 'manage and protect the historical areas of Scotland's old burghs'. The main concern, however, was to be those burghs that had not been previously included in any series of the surveys and to update those from the first series. Shortly after the announcement that a new series would be undertaken, local historical and archaeological interest groups in Dunfermline approached Historic Scotland suggesting Dunfermline as a subject for one of the third series volumes.

The problem faced by all was that a survey of the town had already been published in the 1970s as part of the second series of Burgh Surveys, and it was felt that too many other burghs awaited an initial assessment; certainly, many other old burghs need research and survey, and such a need is not discounted here. Nonetheless, given the continuing academic research on Dunfermline since the 1970s, and the recent growth taking place in the historic heart of the town, local organisations felt it important to update the older survey. To make this possible, funding and support on a local level was sought and obtained, and the Dunfermline Burgh Survey Community Project group was established to oversee the local involvement in the project. Two and a half years later, and with over sixty volunteers contributing to the compilation of the survey, the present volume was published. E. Patricia Dennison, of the Centre for Scottish